

# Vogal Training Safeguarding Newsletter

## Sexual Assault is a serious offence

Let us look at what sexual assault means, what it is and how you can keep yourself safe.

The term sexual assault refers to sexual contact or behaviour that occurs without explicit consent of the victim. Some forms of sexual assault include...

- Attempted rape
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator's body
- Penetration of the victim's body, also known as rape
- Whistles or catcalls
- Making sexual sounds or noises
- Issuing sexual remarks
- Using obscene and offensive language
- Telling inappropriate sexual jokes and innuendos
- Inquiring about a person's sex life
- Verbalising the desire to engage in sexual acts

You may imagine sexual assault as a violent struggle in a dark, public place-by night in a park or an alley and it can be. However, more often, it can be a grope on a crowded train or in a nightclub. It may be hidden behind closed doors-in bedrooms, homes, offices or a place of study.

It happens to people of all ages and genders, whatever their race or sexuality and it can be done by anyone. Perpetrators are often visualised as obscure men, strangers lurking in the darkness, but this is not always the case, most victims know the people who assault them, whether acquaintances, colleagues, friends, or family. Whilst it is true that the majority of perpetrators are men, some are also women.

**Sexual assault is always the perpetrator's fault.** Questions like: "What was she wearing?" "Did she lead him on?" "Was he drunk?" often leave victims feeling responsible for their assault and it makes it seem as if there was something they could have done to prevent it.

This is never true. All of us are free to wear what we like, talk how we please, and drink if the fancy takes us. Sexual assault perpetrators are responsible for their own actions. Their crime is never acceptable. Our bodies are our own. There are no circumstances where you lose the right to control your body. **You don't lose it when you fall asleep, you still have it when you are drunk and even marriage can't erase it.**

### Consent – giving and receiving

Consent is giving permission without fear, force, fraud and having the capacity to do so. It doesn't have to be verbal, but it needs to be real, obvious, and ongoing. Consent only lasts as long as you want it to. You can change your mind and say "no" at any time. Your sexual partner must respect your consent. If you say "no", they have to stop. If they don't, they are committing sexual assault or rape.

Giving consent one time, for one sexual activity, is not giving consent every time, for all sexual activities. This means that you need consent, even if you've had sex with the person before. Whether you're in a relationship, married or have just met the person, you still need consent.

Just because someone agreed to kiss you doesn't mean they agree to let you take their clothes off. Just because they slept with you last week, doesn't mean they'll have sex with you today.

### How do you get consent?

Consent is about communication. There are many ways to get and give consent, and not all of them are verbal. The most obvious way to get consent is to ask. Here are some things you might say if you're in the heat of the moment...

- "Is this ok?"
- "Are you comfortable?"
- "Do you want to slow down?"
- "Do you want to take it further?"

Consent can be nonverbal too. If your partner uses physical cues — like nodding or guiding your hands — you can be confident that they give their consent. **If they push you away, they don't consent.**

It makes sense that if a person is asleep, unconscious, or very intoxicated, they cannot give their consent. Legally, they cannot give their consent if they are under 16 either. This is known as the '**age of consent**'. It is also illegal for someone over 18 to have sexual contact with someone under the age of 18, if the older person holds a position of trust—such as a teacher or social worker.

### What is rape ?

Rape is a form of sexual assault, but not all sexual assault is rape. The term rape is often used as a legal definition to specifically include sexual penetration without consent. Rape is defined as "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.

When people think of rape, they might picture a stranger jumping out of a shadowy place and attacking someone. But in reality, half of all people who are raped know the person who attacked them. This is known as date rape — forced sex that can happen on a date but also somewhere like a party with someone the victim may know, like, or even be interested in.

Girls and women are more likely to be raped and account for 80% of victims, but it can also happen to boys and men. It isn't just men who rape, in rare cases, women rape too.

### Here are three key things to know about rape:

- The person who gets raped is not to blame. Rape is always the rapist's fault. People never "ask for it" because of the clothes they wear or the way they act. If sex is forced against someone's will, it's rape. That is true even when two people are dating or married — even if they have had sex before. You never "owe" someone sex, even if you are a couple.
- Rape is not always violent. If you say "no," but the person doesn't respect your wishes and talks you into something that you don't want, it's rape.

- Rape is not about sex or passion. Forced sex is an act of violence, aggression and power. It has nothing to do with love. Healthy relationships are about respect. Someone who really cares about you will respect your wishes and not force or pressure you to do anything sexual without your agreement.

## Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol and drugs can play a part in date rapes. Drinking alcohol can loosen inhibitions, reduce common sense and for some people, allow aggressive tendencies to surface.

Drugs can take away your ability to be in control or get help. There are 'date rape' drugs such as:

- Rohypnol, commonly called or referred to as 'roofies, lunch money, or mind erasers'
- GHB (gamma hydroxybutyric acid) commonly called or referred to as 'cherry meth, energy drink or gook'
- Ketamine, commonly called or referred to as 'bump, special K or super acid'

These drugs can be mixed into drinks very easily and are almost impossible to detect, especially in dark-coloured drinks or in a dark room. These drugs make people feel weak and confused and can cause them to pass out and forget everything that happened while they are intoxicated with the drug.

These drugs are powerful and dangerous, and mixing them with alcohol is especially dangerous. People can end up dead if they are given a date rape drug when they've been drinking.

## What is force ?

Force doesn't always refer to physical pressure. Perpetrators may use emotional coercion, psychological force, or manipulation to coerce a victim into non-consensual sex. Some perpetrators will use threats to force a victim to comply, such as threatening to hurt the victim or their family or other intimidation tactics.

## Who are the perpetrators ?

The majority of perpetrators are someone known to the victim. Approximately eight out of 10 sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim, such as in the case of intimate partner sexual violence or acquaintance rape.

The term "date rape" is sometimes used to refer to acquaintance rape. Perpetrators of acquaintance rape might be a date, but they could also be a classmate, a neighbour, a friend's significant other, or any number of different roles. It's important to remember that dating, instances of past intimacy, or other acts like kissing do not give someone consent for increased or continued sexual contact.

In other instances the victim may not know the perpetrator at all. This type of sexual violence is sometimes referred to as stranger rape. Stranger rape can occur in several different ways:

**Blitz sexual assault** - when a perpetrator quickly and brutally assaults the victim with no prior contact, usually at night in a public place.

**Contact sexual assault** - when a perpetrator contacts the victim and tries to gain their trust by flirting, luring the victim to their car, or otherwise trying to coerce the victim into a situation where the sexual assault will occur.

**Home invasion sexual assault** - when a stranger breaks into the victim's home to commit the assault.

## Protect Yourself

The best defence against date rape is to try to prevent it so here are some things you can do:

- Avoid secluded places when you're in the early stages of dating or just getting to know someone. Going somewhere you can't get help can be risky if you don't know the person you're with. That includes your room or the other person's. Wait until you trust your partner before going anywhere private or out of the way. Always be sure to have your mobile phone fully charged so you can call for help.
- Don't spend time alone with someone who makes you feel uncomfortable. Always trust your instincts. If a situation doesn't feel right, then it is time to leave.
- Stay sober and aware. If you are with someone you don't know very well, stay aware of what's going on around you. Never drink something that has already been poured or opened, even if it is just a soft drink. Date rape drugs are more easily disguised in dark-coloured drinks like Coke.
- Be aware of your date's ability to agree to sex. You may be guilty of rape if the other person has been drinking, taking drugs, or is not in a condition to respond or react.
- Be clear about what kind of relationship you want with the person. If you are not ready for sex, or touching, or you are not sure, let the other person know.
- Don't let peer pressure push you into something you don't want to do. "Everybody's doing it" is a myth. A lot of teens and young people teens are not having sex, even if they are talking about it.
- Go out with a group of friends and watch out for each other. DO NOT be afraid to ask for help if you feel threatened. Ask for Angela is a national personal safety campaign that you can learn about [here](#).
- Take self-defence courses. These can build confidence and teach valuable physical techniques you can use to get away from an attacker.

## Help and support for victims

It is not uncommon for a victim of sexual assault to have no physical injuries or signs of their assault. But sexual assault is still a crime and can be reported to the police in the same way as other crimes.

Sexual violence or assault can happen to anyone of any age: men, women and children and for the victim, the extent of the sexual assault is no indication of how distressing they find it, or how violated they feel. It is important that anyone affected receives the right advice and support.

If you are the victim of rape or sexual assault, the police and other organisations are there to help.

Call 999 to report a rape or attempted sexual assault, as soon as possible after the crime. If the offence has recently happened...

- Keep the clothes you were wearing and don't wash them - the police may need them as evidence for the investigation  
As difficult as it may be, try not to shower as there may be evidence which the police can use

- If you are under the age of 17, the Child Protection unit from the local police station will deal with your case

If you don't want to report it to the police, some geographic areas have Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) – you can use the [NHS Choices tool](#) to find one in your area. They can offer you medical support and collect evidence that can be used later.

You can also contact a support organisation...

- Rape Crisis (for women) - [Looking for tools to help you cope? | Rape Crisis England & Wales](#)
- Victim Support - information for women - [Information leaflets - Victim Support](#)
- Victim Support - information for men - [Information leaflets - Victim Support](#)

None of these organisations will make you report the assault to the police unless you want to.

**The Survivors Trust** - [Our Helpline | The Survivors Trust](#)

**Support Line** - [Contact Us \(supportline.org.uk\)](#)

**Helpguide** - [Recovering from Rape and Sexual Trauma - HelpGuide.org](#)

**Refuge** - [Support for sexual abuse victims - Refuge Charity - Domestic Violence Help](#)

**The Bridgeway** - [The Bridgeway - Supporting the victims of Rape or Serious Sexual Assault](#)

**Women Against Rape** – [www.womenagainstrape.net](http://www.womenagainstrape.net)

**Women's Aid Federation** – [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

**Rape & Sexual Assault Abroad – Returning to the UK** – [Rape and sexual assault abroad: returning to the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**Support for British Nationals Abroad** – [Support for British nationals abroad: A guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**Rape Crisis Network Europe** – [www.rcne.com](http://www.rcne.com)

**NHS** - [Help after rape and sexual assault - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

# Myth Buster

## DRUNK OR HIGH

### Myth:

Some people think that someone who gets drunk or takes drugs should be blamed for their rape or sexual assault.

### Reality

This should never be the case. Someone who is unconscious, or very drunk or high, can't give consent. Having sex with someone who is incapacitated is rape. The blame is always on the perpetrator.

## FRIENDS & ACQUAINTANCES

### Myth:

Many people believe that victims are only raped or sexually assaulted by strangers.

### Reality

Most rapes are committed by people the victim knows. Perpetrators can be friends, colleagues, neighbours, family members, or partners.

## VIOLENCE

### Myth:

It's commonly believed that rape and sexual assault always involves physical violence.

### Reality

There are many situations in which someone might not have the ability or freedom to consent to sex. They may be asleep or unconscious, or too young to give consent. A perpetrator may threaten a victim's job, reputation, or family to force them to go along with sex. They may threaten their victim with violence, without carrying out their threat.

## BOYFRIENDS / GIRLFRIENDS / PARTNERS

### Myth:

Some might say that if someone has consented to sex once, they consent every time.

### Reality

Sexual assault can happen in relationships, or between people who have had sex with each other before. Consent needs to happen each and every time. Without consent, it's rape.

## FLIRT

### Myth:

Some people think that if someone is flirting, or wearing revealing clothing, they're asking to be raped.

### Reality

No one asks to be sexually assaulted, and no one's appearance or behaviour should ever suggest otherwise. Rape has nothing to do with how the victim was dressed, or how they were acting.

## **OVER PANTS**

### **Myth:**

Many people think that it's not sexual assault if they still have their clothes on.

### **Reality**

Sexual assault is any sexual touching that happens without consent. It could happen in the middle of a work day, at a party, or on public transport—places where people are fully clothed.

## **ASLEEP OR UNCONSCIOUS**

### **Myth:**

Some people believe that it's ok to have sex with someone when they are asleep or unconscious.

### **Reality**

People who are asleep or unconscious cannot give consent. Sex without consent is rape.

## **DEPRESSED**

### **Myth:**

You may have heard that people commit sexual assault and rape because they are depressed, drunk, or on drugs.

### **Reality**

Depression and intoxication do not cause sexual assault or rape—and they don't excuse or explain it, either.

## **HARD TO GET**

### **Myth:**

Some people think that 'no' can mean 'yes'.

### **Reality**

Everyone has the right to say 'no' to sex, and to change their mind at any time. Their wishes must be respected.

## **TIME'S UP**

### **Myth:**

You may have heard that if you have suffered a sexual assault or rape, you must report straight away.

### **Reality**

Sexual assault and rape are traumatic experiences. It might take time to build up the courage to report it. There is no time limit to report a sexual assault or rape. You can do it when you are ready. That said, there are benefits to telling someone early. Speaking to the staff at The Rowan will help you access support services and medical help at a critical time.

**Don't believe the myths, sexual assault can take many different forms, but one thing remains the same: it is never the victim's fault.**